

Virtual Machines



The term *virtualization* has many meanings, and aspects of virtualization permeate all aspects of computing. Virtual machines are one instance of this trend. Generally, with a virtual machine, guest operating systems and applications run in an environment that appears to them to be native hardware and that behaves toward them as native hardware would but that also protects, manages, and limits them.

This chapter delves into the uses, features, and implementation of virtual machines. Virtual machines can be implemented in several ways, and this chapter describes these options. One option is to add virtual machine support to the kernel. Because that implementation method is the most pertinent to this book, we explore it most fully. Additionally, hardware features provided by the CPU and even by I/O devices can support virtual machine implementation, so we discuss how those features are used by the appropriate kernel modules.

Bibliographical Notes

The original IBM VM system was described in [Meyer and Seawright (1970)]. [Popek and Goldberg (1974)] established the characteristics that help define VMMs. Methods of implementing virtual machines are discussed in [Agesen et al. (2010)].

Virtualization has been an active research area for many years. Disco was one of the first attempts to use virtualization to enforce logical isolation and provide scalability on multicore systems ([Bugnion et al. (1997)]). Based on that work and other work, Quest-V used virtualization to create an entire distributed operating system within a multicore system ([Li et al. (2011)]).

Intel x86 hardware virtualization support is described in [Neiger et al. (2006)]. AMD hardware virtualization support is described in a white paper (<http://developer.amd.com/assets/NPT-WP-1%201-final-TM.pdf>).

KVM is described in [Kivity et al. (2007)]. Xen is described in [Barham et al. ()]. Oracle Solaris containers are similar to BSD jails, as described in [Poul-henning Kamp (2000)].

[Agesen et al. (2010)] discusses the performance of binary translation. Memory management in VMware is described in [Waldspurger (2002)]. The

problem of I/O overhead in virtualized environments has a proposed solution in [Gordon et al. (2012)]. Some protection challenges and attacks in virtual environments are discussed in [Wojtczuk and Ruthkowska ()].

Live process migration research occurred in the 1980s and was first discussed in [Powell and Miller (1983)]. Problems identified in that research left migration in a functionally limited state, as described in [Milojicic et al. (2000)]. VMware realized that virtualization could allow functional live migration and described prototype work in [Chandra et al. (2002)]. VMware shipped the vMotion live migration feature as part of VMware vCenter, as described in VMware VirtualCenter User’s Manual Version 1.0 http://www.vmware.com/pdf/VirtualCenter_Users_Manual.pdf). The details of the implementation of a similar feature in the Xen VMM are found in [Clark et al. (2005)].

Research showing that, without interrupt remapping, malicious guests can generate interrupts that can be used to gain control of the host system is discussed in [Wojtczuk and Ruthkowska ()].

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